

Facilities Management from A to Z



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Business Continuity

Many people confuse the terminology used by business continuity professionals; in everyday talk contingency planning, crisis management and disaster recovery, have become almost interchangeable terms for the same thing. In practice however they refer to different elements of one activity generally called business continuity management.

The Business Continuity Institute (BCI) defines business continuity management as a “holistic management process that identifies potential impacts that threaten an organisation and provides a framework for building resilience and the capability for an effective response that safeguards the interests of its key stakeholders, reputation, brand and value creating activities.”

In short, the focus is on maintaining the continuity of the business; ensuring that the stability, function and plans of the organisation in question are protected from interruption. This is important because 80% of businesses that are involved in major disasters are said to close within 18 months while 90% of businesses that lose data from a disaster are forced to shut within 2 years.

The business continuity process begins with the identification of potential risks, impacts and likelihoods. From this analysis decisions can be taken about risk reduction, mitigation or management. The development of a comprehensive set of contingency plans is the vital first step. A good business continuity plan is a clearly defined and documented roadmap for use in the event of an emergency or disaster.

If the anticipated risk does materialise a set of planned, prepared and tested crisis management processes can be implemented. Clear, proactive and continuous communication is seriously important in these circumstances. Every person involved must know their role and play their part effectively.

Some businesses need to maintain delivery of service during a crisis albeit at a reduced service level. This is a key decision to be taken during the planning process as it can lead to significant investment. The BCI defines disaster recovery as “An integral part of the organisation’s business continuity plan by which it intends to recover and restore its ... capabilities after an event, incident or crisis”

This means getting back to normal business operations. In some circumstances this is just about rebuilding or repairing the earlier position. However those who have invested a little more in service continuity may find this a good opportunity to introduce a few changes.

Business analysis, risk reduction and careful planning are all vital elements of the business continuity process. Investment in the proper training, equipping and testing of the disaster management solution is equally important. With these building blocks in place the crisis management, service continuity and restoration activities are far more likely to succeed.

For more detailed information visit the Business Continuity Institute website www.thebci.org